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## FROM FIELD AND STUDY

**The Capture of Water-fowl in Fish Nets.**—The recent note by Mr. Stanley G. Jewett<sup>1</sup> on the accidental capture of a White-winged Scoter (*Oidemia deglandi*) in a salmon net, is of particular interest in view of the fact that the Bureau of Biological Survey is giving attention to the use of nets to capture birds for banding purposes.<sup>2</sup>

As stated in the paper referred to in the accompanying foot-note, several forms of net traps have been successfully used, among them being the well-known "fyke" net. This contrivance is made by covering a series of four iron hoops, three to four feet in diameter, with cord webbing. When fully extended the hoops are about two feet apart, and the web cylinder thus produced is divided into two chambers by means of web funnels. The first of these has a large mouth while the second is much reduced. Short wings or guides of webbing are extended from the mouth of the trap and the whole affair is held in place in shallow water by long stakes forced into the mud.

In the marshes of the Illinois River these nets are used extensively for the capture of carp, buffalo, and other fishes, an energetic fisherman frequently running a line of forty to fifty "fykes". The nets are placed in areas where large numbers of ducks gather to feed, and it is common to find half a dozen mallards or pintails in a single net. During March, 1922, while engaged in banding work in this region, I made a practice of trying to beat the fisherman to the nets that were set in my neighborhood for the purpose of securing any ducks that might have been caught. Pintails were most frequently taken and it was noticeable that they were usually caught in flocks of four to six, indicating that they fed in small groups and were strongly inclined to "follow the leader".

In this connection, mention may also be made of a recent "return" from a Buffle-head duck that was banded by Mr. Verdi Burtch, at Branchport, New York, on April 6, 1922. Eleven days later (April 17) the bird was found entangled in a herring net in Georgian Bay, near Collingwood, Ontario.

The problem of evolving suitable methods for the capture of diving ducks for banding purposes will still require considerable experimentation, but present indications are that some form of a submerged net will prove most satisfactory. Such a device will, of course, require an arrangement that will bring captured birds safely to the surface after they have entered the chambers or pockets of the trap.—FREDERICK C. LINCOLN, U. S. Biological Survey, Washington, D. C., August 14, 1922.

**Northward Range of the Gray Vireo in California.**—While on a short collecting trip as guest of Mr. A. Brazier Howell, I spent the afternoon of July 25, 1922, on the west slope of Walker Pass, which is in northeastern Kern County, California, at the southern end of the main high Sierra Nevada. The feature of the occasion was my meeting with an adult pair of Gray Vireos (*Vireo vicinior*). The exact spot was on a steep, north-facing hillside within one-fourth mile south of "Jack's Station" (now merely a roadside camping place); altitude close to 4500 feet; life-zone Upper Sonoran, in a semi-arid phase of it. The birds were in sparse brush (*Garrya*, *Kunzia*, *Artemesia tridentata*, and *Cercocarpus betulaefolius*); and a digger pine and a pinyon both grew within one hundred feet of where they were discovered.

I was first attracted by the broken, post-nuptially rendered song of the male—intermittent and sketchy, yet distinct enough from the songs of other vireos to be recognized at once. This male Gray Vireo was promptly shot. It proved to be in molt, with only two of the old tail-feathers remaining and with new feathers showing where old ones had fallen out, in the wings and in most of the body tracts. The weight of the bird was 12.5 grams. It is now catalogued as no. 43295 of the bird collection in the California Museum of Vertebrate Zoology.

A minute or two after shooting the singing bird, I caught sight of the other bird which I concluded was the female of the pair. The only note she gave was a low harsh *churr* or *shray*, given now and then as she hopped slowly through the twiggery. From the bushes she went into the pinyon tree before mentioned, and thence into the digger

<sup>1</sup>Condor, XXIV, May, 1922, p. 95.

<sup>2</sup>Auk, XXXIX, no. 3, July, 1922, pp. 322-334, pls. XI-XIV: "Trapping Ducks for Banding Purposes", by Frederick C. Lincoln.

pine, reaching the unusual height of some fifteen feet above the slope at the base of the tree. Her head was turned from side to side at frequent intervals, especially when she approached and eyed me curiously at a range of not more than twelve feet.

As for field characters, besides the general deliberateness of movement, the thick, dark-colored bill was well seen; the gray tone of color both above and below was noticeable; there was no crest, nor inclination to a crest. I was particularly struck by the relative great length of tail, for a vireo; also this member drooped, most of the time, below the axis-line of the body. It will be recalled that chaparral-dwellers in general, whatever their genetic affiliations, have relatively long tails—for example, Bell Sparrows, Bewick Wrens, Wren-tits, Gnatcatchers, Towhees, and Thrashers.

Some of the above observations will be found new or supplementary to those reported for the Gray Vireo from the San Jacinto region (Grinnell and Swarth, Univ. Calif. Publ. Zool., vol. 10, 1913, pp. 291-297).

This Walker Pass record is the northernmost in California so far known for the species. In fact, only one other occurrence has been reported from north of west-central Los Angeles County (whence reported by Loyal Miller, Condor, xxIII, 1921, p. 194). This other northern record (Grinnell, Pac. Coast Avifauna no. 11, 1915, p. 144) is for a point at 2400 feet altitude near Bodfish, on the Kern River, in Kern County. An adult female (now no. 20679, Mus. Vert. Zool.) was collected there by Walter P. Taylor on June 16, 1911. It is in worn "breeding" plumage. Mr. Taylor's field-notes indicate that the bird was taken on a slope clothed in part with junipers and digger pines—evidently good Upper Sonoran. The date of capture would argue for its nesting in the immediate vicinity.

There are vast areas of the same sort of territory as has afforded the two Kern County records, around the southern Sierra Nevada. It all looks like perfectly proper country for Gray Vireos. I am tempted to believe that the species will be found widely, though not abundantly, represented there by someone seeking it in May or June, who is familiar with its song and habitat predilections.—J. GRINNELL, *Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California, Berkeley, August 19, 1922.*

**Two Birds from the Bitterroot Valley, Montana.**—Ross Goose (*Chen rossi*). As most of the records of this goose in Montana are from points east of the divide, it seems worth while to record one that was taken at Corvallis, October 10, 1911. The specimen is a female, and is now in the Zoological Museum, University of Minnesota.

Rough-legged Hawk (*Archibuteo lagopus sancti-johannis*). Through an oversight I omitted this species from the list sent to Mr. Saunders several years ago. There is a specimen, a male bird, taken by the writer at Corvallis, January 10, 1910, in the Museum collection at the University of Minnesota. The species was a fairly common winter visitor in this vicinity.—BERNARD BAILEY, *Elk River, Minnesota, June 2, 1922.*

**Blackbirds Flocking.**—In the May, 1922, issue of THE CONDOR (p. 93) mention is made of the Yellow-headed Blackbird flocking with Brewer Blackbirds. It is not an unusual occurrence here to see a combined flock of Brewer and Red-winged Blackbirds, Cowbirds and one or two Yellow-heads all feeding together on the ground, generally about the early part of May. By that time the Cowbirds have arrived and the other several species have not yet scattered to their widely differing nesting grounds. On May 3, this year, I passed by one bull lying out in the pasture with an attendant group of three or four Cowbirds and one Yellow-headed Blackbird, though I cannot say I saw the latter perch on the bull's back like the Cowbirds.—L. B. POTTER, *Eastend, Saskatchewan, July 8, 1922.*

**Notes from Southwestern New Mexico.**—White-winged Scoter (*Oidemia deglandi*). An adult female was brought to me November 10, 1921. It had been taken from a flock of six, on a small irrigation pond on Duck Creek, thirty miles northwest of Silver City. None of our local shooters remember to have taken this species in this country.

Zone-tailed Hawk (*Buteo abbreviatus*). From Tyrone, Grant County, New Mexico, a fine adult female was brought to me on April 15, 1922. Another was seen on several occasions in the same locality. I have never before seen this species in ten years careful collecting in southwestern New Mexico.

Arizona Cardinal (*Cardinalis cardinalis superbus*). On May 8, 1922, at Red Rock, Grant County, New Mexico, these Cardinals were abundant, at least a dozen being seen, and a pair taken. The Gila River comes out of a tight "box" just northeast of Red Rock, and at that point their distribution up the river seems to end.

White-winged Dove (*Melopelia asiatica*). At Red Rock on the same date as above I took a male of this species. Ranchmen told me that these birds had appeared in this locality in the spring of the previous year (1921), but that they had never been noticed before that time.—R. T. KELLOGG, *Silver City, New Mexico, July 13, 1922.*

**Birds Eating Snails.**—In connection with the survey of infested areas and subsequent clean-up of the European snail, *Helix pisana*, at La Jolla, it is interesting to note that two birds have been observed by the writer as feeding on this mollusk.

The infested territory was burned over about three years ago and at that time enormous numbers of snails were killed, a very strong odor of burning flesh being apparent. Immediately thereafter flocks of sea gulls came in and feasted on the roasted snails; but, although outside of the burned area many live snails were in evidence on low bushes and shrubs, no gulls were observed to feed on them.

Another infestation of this snail at La Jolla has now occurred, and while making a survey of the district last week with Mr. A. J. Basinger of the Pest Control Division of the State Department of Agriculture, I noted a male English Sparrow busily engaged in feeding on young live snails clustered on a small dead Monterey cypress tree. At this stage the shells are, of course, soft and easily broken. The English Sparrow has long been regarded as an undesirable immigrant, but it would seem that it has scored a point in its own favor if it is to be regarded as an enemy of this destructive snail.—R. R. MCLEAN, *County Horticultural Commissioner, San Diego, July 26, 1922.*

**The Snowy Egret in Los Angeles County, California.**—While studying shore-birds at Playa del Rey, September 25, 1922, Mesdames C. H. Hall, A. J. Mix, and F. T. Bicknell, members of the Los Angeles Audubon Society, were fortunate in having a close and unobstructed view of a Snowy Egret (*Egretta candidissima candidissima*). It was on a sand bar in the lagoon in company with a small flock of Western Gulls. Mrs. Hall was the first to sight the bird.

Standing in a semi-meditative attitude among the Gulls, not over two hundred feet from shore, the Egret offered a perfect opportunity for study. With field glasses as aids, though not a necessity, its pure white plumage, size, movements, graceful poses and other identification marks were carefully noted. We also observed the uplifting of one slender black leg, the opening and closing of the yellow toes, the stretching of the beautiful white wing, the opening of the long slender ebony bill with its yellow base, and the sleepy blinking of the eyes which enhanced the yellow of the iris. An occasional light puff of the sea-breeze raised and ruffled the snowy feathers on the bird's head and back, giving a momentary semi-nuptial plumage effect.

The encroaching waters of the incoming tide moistened the sand under the Egret's feet, which it resented by moving a few paces nearer the indifferent Gulls. For fully twenty minutes we studied this beautiful and rare bird, when suddenly, alone and without warning, it took flight above the lagoon and disappeared among the sloughs of the adjoining marsh lands.

The larger, American Egret (*Herodias egretta*) is a regular winter visitant on the San Pedro tide lands and Seal Beach salt marshes and is often studied by the Audubon members. Reporting the event to Mr. L. E. Wyman, Ornithologist at the Los Angeles Museum, he suggested, since the Snowy Egret has so few records in this vicinity, that it was well worth mentioning.—MRS. F. T. BICKNELL, *Los Angeles, California, October 2, 1922.*

**Perching Pelicans.**—Three times in the past three years I have seen individuals of the California Brown Pelican (*Pelecanus californicus*) perch on the wire stretched just above the top of the rail of our pier. This wire is about  $\frac{1}{8}$  inch in diameter and it is stretched fairly taut, being supported at intervals of about ten feet by upright spikes so that its height above the pier rail is about four inches.

At 7:52 A. M. on September 19, 1922, while working at the end of the pier I noticed a Brown Pelican alight on the rail about one hundred feet away. I quickly took

a fairly comfortable position with the intention of observing the bird's actions as carefully as possible. I could see his feet distinctly and his toes seemed to curl around and grasp the wire in the same way as those of a perching bird. He was standing almost erect and teetering a good deal in an effort to find his balance. Several times the pelican tried to stoop to a sitting posture but with very unsettling results. Once while trying to preen his breast feathers he almost fell over backward and had to flap his wings vigorously to get balanced again. Finally he became satisfied with the erect posture and remained in it for probably ten minutes. In the erect posture for a time his balancing movements were so nearly imperceptible at one hundred feet distance that I would not have been able to detect them if I had not had the advantage of a series of cross wires on a gate within about thirty feet of the bird. By use of these wires I was able to estimate that at best there was rhythmic movement of the head up and down through a distance of at least a half inch, varied every few seconds by a longer swing of two to three inches.

Just before this relatively stable period he had lifted first one foot and then the other several times as though the wire hurt his feet. Indeed, this performance reminded me very much of a barefoot boy trying to stand on a hot pavement. At the end of the quiet period the pelican began side-stepping and walked on the wire a distance of about four feet at the end of which he turned around facing in the opposite direction. In making the turn he got a good deal unbalanced and saved himself from falling by stepping onto the wooden rail with one foot. He again assumed the erect position and remained thus for some little time until excited by the screeching of a flock of gulls which flew near him. At 8:15 he flew away after having perched on the small wire for twenty-three minutes.

When first alighting he had been facing the pier and away from the water. The half turn made after the side-stepping performance brought him into a position facing the water. Before beginning the side-stepping he had made several efforts to stoop, with very strong appearance of getting ready to fly. Every effort to stoop destroyed his balance and he could not get a good jump into the air for starting flight. I do not think it possible that he could have gotten enough jump to enable him to clear the opposite rail. Whatever the actual reason for the half turn it certainly put him into position (facing the water) to launch easily into flight.

I have mentioned a failure to keep balance while attempting to preen. There were two or three fairly successful attempts but they were confined to very small adjustments of breast feathers with very brief action. At various times in the perching period the head was rotated from side to side but this did not involve much shifting in weight and was not very disturbing to balance.

The three cases which I have seen indicate that pelicans do have perching ambitions and that they can make a very creditable showing in a difficult situation. Do such performances indicate vestigial or initiatory tendencies in behavior?—W. E. ALLEN, *Scripps Institution for Biological Research of the University of California, La Jolla, September 20, 1922.*

## EDITORIAL NOTES AND NEWS

The editors of THE CONDOR are once more indebted to Mr. J. R. Pemberton for assistance. The annual index concluding our present volume was in large measure prepared by him.

Volume II, numbers 3-4 (in one), of Dawson's "Journal of the Museum of Comparative Oology" (Santa Barbara) reached our desk on October 31. A very important new nesting record for California is that, by Mr. W. L. Dawson, of the Yellow Rail in

Mono County. Mr. A. B. Howell contributes an article on "The Ethics of Collecting" which is fraught with sound sense; the principles set forth ought to be followed conscientiously by all collectors, and then there would be far less of criticism levied at the fraternity than is, unfortunately, now the case. The greater part of this issue of the "Journal" is occupied by accounts of nest-hunting, chiefly with the Sierra Nevada Rosy Finch as the objective, and with the human-interest element emphasized rather than the ornithological.